

LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Natchez National Historical Park

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prepared by

Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Natchez National Historical Park

Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Purpose and Context of the Plan | 3 |
| Background | 3 |
| Park Purpose | 5 |
| Park Significance | 5 |
| Primary Interpretive Themes | 7 |
| Visitor Experience Goals | 11 |
| Existing Visitor Experience..... | 13 |
| Visitation and Visitor Use Data | 16 |

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Pre-Arrival Information | 19 |
| On-Arrival Information | 20 |
| Fort Rosalie | 21 |
| William Johnson House | 23 |
| Melrose | 24 |
| Personal Services | 27 |
| Education Program | 28 |
| Publications | 29 |
| Partnerships | 30 |
| Evaluation | 31 |

SUMMARIES

| | |
|--|----|
| Special Populations | 32 |
| Staffing and Training | 33 |
| Support Resources and Facilities | 36 |
| Summary of Products | 37 |
| Implementation Priorities | 39 |
| Planning Team and Consultants | 40 |

APPENDIX

| | |
|--|----|
| Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media | 41 |
|--|----|

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Context of the Plan

This long-range interpretive plan (LRIP) for the Natchez National Historical Park (NATC) is a component of the park's comprehensive interpretive plan (CIP), as outlined in the National Park Service Interpretive Guidelines (NPS-6). Using the park's mission, purpose, and resource significance statements, plus the primary interpretive themes and visitor experience goals, this plan articulates a vision for the park's interpretive future, and recommends the media and programs best suited for meeting visitor needs, achieving management goals, and telling the park stories. These foundation elements come directly from- or are based on similar statements in the park's Strategic Plan and General Management Plan (GMP).

A previous interpretive plan, approved in 1994, was developed by Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) in conjunction with the GMP. Since then, a number of changes have occurred in park facilities, resource knowledge, interpretive media, programs, and management philosophy. Specific changes include the completion of the Natchez Visitor Reception Center, relocation of park offices, restoration of the William Johnson House, and removal of buildings from the Fort Rosalie site. The park also wants to continue strengthening relations with the community and park partners.

This plan is not an end in itself, but rather, it establishes the overall framework for the next phases of the process—program planning, and media planning, design, and production over the next 7-10 years. Further, as stated in NPS-6, the park needs to develop Annual Implementation Plans and an Interpretive Database to complete the CIP.

Background

Natchez National Historical Park was established by Congress by Public Law 100-479 (October 7, 1988) to preserve and interpret the history of Natchez, Mississippi. This enabling legislation directs the NPS to:

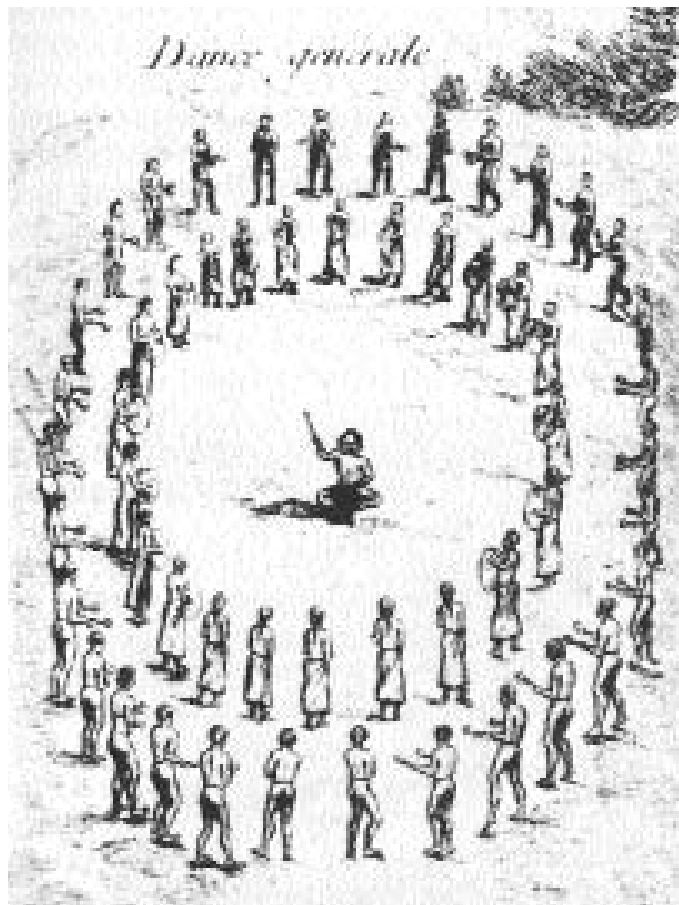
- Preserve and interpret the history of Natchez, Mississippi as a significant city in the history of the American South.
- Preserve and interpret the sites and structures associated with all the peoples of Natchez and its surrounding area, from earliest inhabitants to the modern era and including blacks, both slave and free.
- Preserve and interpret the region's social, political, and economic development, with particular emphasis on the pre- and post-Civil War eras.
- Preserve and interpret the region's commercial and agricultural history, especially in relation to the Mississippi River and cotton.

The park is in the city of Natchez in southwestern Mississippi, approximately 100 miles southwest of Jackson (the state capital), 70 miles south of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and 90 miles north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Travelers can reach Natchez by car along U.S. Highway 84 from the east and west, U.S. Highway 61 from the north and south, and the Natchez Track Parkway from Jackson. The nearest major commercial airports are in Jackson and Baton

Rouge. In season, riverboats plying the Mississippi River carry tourists to Natchez.

Historically, Natchez was the beginning of the Natchez Trace, a primitive trail stretching about 500 miles to Nashville, Tennessee. Today the Natchez Trace Parkway and the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail commemorate the old trace.

The park is comprised of three separate properties—the Melrose estate (78.6 acres in NPS ownership), the William Johnson complex (about EMBED Equation.3 acre in NPS ownership), and Fort Rosalie (32.48 acres being acquired by the NPS).



PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE

Park Purpose

The purpose of Natchez National Historical Park is to study, preserve, and promote the public recognition and appreciation of historic and prehistoric resources and material remains of past human life and activities significant in the history of Natchez, Mississippi from the age of discovery through the modern era, with an emphasis on the cotton kingdom (1795-1910).

Park Significance

1. The Natchez region illustrates French, British, Spanish, and finally U.S. rivalry for dominance in the lower Mississippi Valley.

Although North America was less an arena of armed rivalry among the European powers than were the sugar-rich islands of the Caribbean, the New World became entangled in the global struggle for control of land and sea that erupted late in the 17th century.

For most of the 18th century, the lower Mississippi Valley existed as an outpost of the European economy. Royal officials supported their risky colonial ventures because they hoped that they could lure settlers to the area, find a staple crop or commodity their nations could not produce, and provide a market for the manufacturers of the empire.

The Natchez region was ruled over by the French (1699-1763), British (1763-1779), and Spanish (1779-1798). On March 30, 1798, the area was turned over to the fledgling United States. These contests for empire had tremendous consequences for all involved—the home governments, the colonial immigrants, and the Indian tribes that inhabited the contested lands. This was primarily true for the Natchez, who were nearly annihilated as a result of this struggle for empire.

2. Natchez is the symbolic capital of the cotton kingdom.

Throughout the late 18th century, the demand for cotton was growing, especially in England, where new textile factories created an insatiable appetite for the crop. Demand and supply began to come together in 1793 with the invention of the cotton gin and the introduction of short-staple cotton, which could grow anywhere in the south. With its warm climate, wet springs and summers, and relatively dry autumns, the lower south was especially suited to the cultivation of cotton.

The potential for profits began luring immigrants into the lower Mississippi Valley during the early decades of the 19th century. A number of these, particularly those educated in professions such as law and medicine, were attracted to the Natchez area where, not only could they establish a lucrative practice, but also avail themselves of the city's amenities and social life. As this class prospered, they began to invest heavily in land and slaves. Through intermarriage with other families of gentility, these "nabobs" (as one territorial official dubbed the members of the nouveau riche) formed a tight knit group of, although not always like-minded people, persons connected by common interests and needs.

3. Natchez National Historical Park was established in part to interpret chattel slavery.

Planters could take advantage of the cotton market only if they commanded sufficient labor to

increase their output. Thus, gentlemen planters invested heavily in slaves who would produce the cotton which would support the gentry lifestyle.

The first African slaves were brought into the region in the early 1720s by the French to harvest tobacco, indigo, timber, and other crops, and to serve the households of the wealthy planters. The advent of cotton plantations in the 1820s, however, created a great demand for slaves. Chesapeake planters, moving from a tobacco economy to a less labor intensive grain economy, found a ready market for their surplus slaves in the lower Mississippi Valley. A bustling slave trade began in Natchez at the “Forks in the Road” market, rivaled only by Algiers in New Orleans as the busiest slave mart in the south.

The Natchez region provides the unique opportunity to study and interpret plantation, town, and estate slavery and the African-American cultures, which developed in these settings. At the same time, it permits the interpretation of the impact of chattel slavery upon the white cultures, not only of Natchez, but of the nation as a whole.

4. Natchez is a “museum” of 19th and early 20th century American architecture and decorative arts.

Because Natchez had no railways or fortifications of strategic significance, the city escaped the destruction of the Civil War. Today, Natchez is famous among America’s historic cities for its wealth of architecturally significant buildings. As of 1993, the city contained approximately 105 structures and six historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places.



PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Primary interpretive themes are those ideas/concepts about NATC that hopefully every visitor will understand. The themes, which are based on the park's purpose, and resource significance, provide the foundation for all interpretive media and programs in the park. The themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they do address those ideas that are critical to understanding and appreciating the park's importance. All interpretive efforts (through both media and personal services) should relate to one or more of the themes, and each theme should be addressed by some part of the overall interpretive program. Effective interpretation results when visitors are able to connect the concepts with the resources and derive something meaningful from the experience.

The following theme statements will provide the basis for interpretation at NATC:

1. The Mississippi River sustained and provided for the survival of the Natchezians, bringing success and prosperity to some and enslavement and despair to others.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to appreciate the river as a:

- System vital to survival
- Corridor for exploration
- Major transportation route
- Resource of beauty and aesthetic value
- Link with the rest of the country, the world and its markets
- Prime natural force in creating the Natchez landscape
- Food source (via fishing and the transportation of goods from other markets)
- Motivator of technology (i.e. steamboats, levee systems, etc.)
- Source of spirituality (i.e. the American Indian belief that water is the sustainer of life)
- Source of mythology (i.e. Mark Twain, Mike Fink, Jim Bowie, and the reputation of Under-The-Hill)
- Vehicle of success, prosperity, and accessibility (i.e. association with the Louisiana Purchase, coming of the steamboats, development of the cotton gin, proximity to New Orleans, etc.)
- Natural resource supporting the early fur trade, timber for building steamboats, Cyprus lumber for export, etc.
- Source of despair and hope (i.e. the threat of being sold down or across the river versus the river as an escape route to freedom)
- Creator of sub-cultures (i.e. the life styles Under-The-Hill)

2. Fertile soil, climate favorable to cotton, river transportation, and a plantation based slave labor system provided the foundation for Natchez' economic success and develop-

ment in the early to mid 19th century.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to understand:

- That the economy of Natchez was cotton-based
- That Natchez was an agrarian society with an economy based on a slave labor system
- The slave nature and extent of the labor system
- That even people who were not southern planters were tied to its system and economy

3. Social dominance and economic prosperity in Natchez was achieved through racial and cultural exploitation.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to understand the:

- Hierarchical class system which created distinctions between black & white; have & have nots; rich & poor; free blacks & whites; free blacks & slaves; house, grounds, and field slaves; and, European settlers & Natchez Indians.
- Progressive destruction and ultimate relocation of the Natchez, Choctaw, and Chickasaw cultures to provide expanded agricultural opportunities for European American farmers and planters.
- Religious/biblical positions defending and attacking slavery and social dominance.
- Economic system and wealth which supported and relied on slavery.
- Institution of slavery as a once legal and accepted form of labor and a way of life.
- Struggles over segregation, integration, and other civil rights.
- Share cropping system
- Role of the KKK
- Role of the military in providing opportunities for freed slaves.
- Significance and magnitude of the slave market in Natchez.

4. The historic structures in downtown Natchez exist because the success of the planter class sustained an integrated and diversified economy that supported a multi-faceted middle class, both black and white.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to appreciate the:

- Variety of service industries in Natchez (i.e. brick layers, barbers, craftsmen, food merchants, boarding houses, laundries, etc.)
- Ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of the middle class in Natchez.
- Prominent and influential Jewish population that had far-reaching influences.

5. The history of the ebb and flow of power, influence, and control in Natchez can be seen in the community's historic sites.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to understand the significance of the structures and sites that include but are not limited to:

- Fort Rosalie
- Emerald Mound
- Grand Village
- The many mansions
- Courthouse
- Natchez Institute
- Churches
- Schools
- Historic Neighborhoods
- Forks in the Road

6. The unique concentration of 19th century architecture in Natchez is the result of the economic success of the planter class.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to gain insights into the:

- Life styles of the wealthy cotton planters in contrast to other Natchez residents.
- Various architectural and furnishing styles and their symbolism in Natchez society.
- Functional aspects of the architecture and furnishings in adapting to the southern climate.
- Role of planter class women as heads of households while the men traveled to the plantations.
- Myths and realities related to the life styles, furnishings, and slaves who served the planter class.
- Continuity of families with several of the estates.
- Development of cultural tourism and the role of the garden clubs.
- Importance to the community of retaining elements of the past while transitioning to the future.

7. Natchez represents a complex multi-leveled society with surprising connections and influences throughout the United States.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors to understand that:

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- Some group was always at the top of the hill in the Natchez social hierarchy, but there were also different hills.
 - While many Natchezians fit various southern stereotypes, it is important to see them as individuals.
 - Individuals, groups, and societies need to be seen within the context of their time.
 - Natchez had strong ties to the Northeast cotton mills and to European cotton markets.
 - Northern settlers were a significant part of the Natchez community.
 - Complex alliances existed in Natchez during the Civil War.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

The following articulates the visitor experience goals that the implementation of this long-range interpretive plan will help to achieve. Gaining an understanding and appreciation of the interpretive themes from the previous section should be regarded as cognitive visitor experience goals. The goal statements below describe other future conditions that will exist, but not specific actions to achieve them.

Visitors to Natchez National Historical Park will have opportunities to:

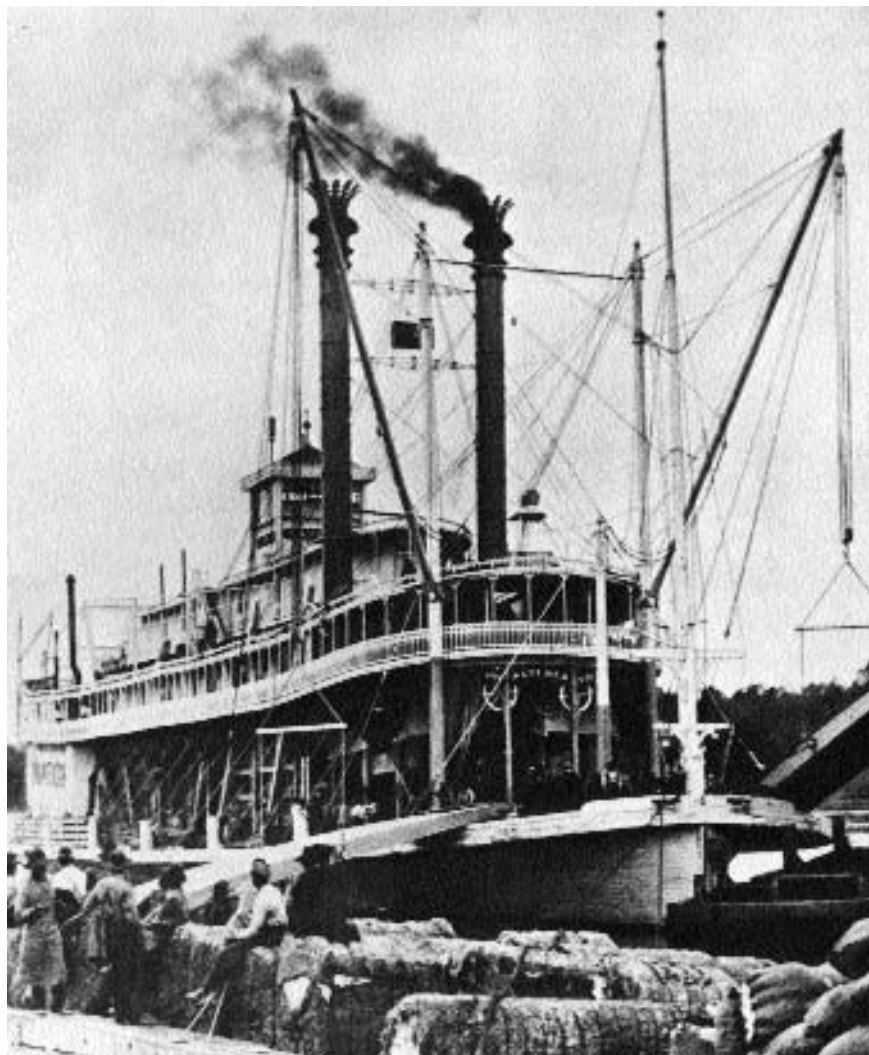
(A) Have a safe and satisfying visit by ensuring opportunities exist where they may:

- Get information about the park before they arrive.
- Make the visitor center their first stop.
- Get accurate and up-to-date information from multiple providers.
- Easily find convenience facilities (i.e. rest rooms, vending machines, picnic areas, etc.)
- Ask questions of park employees.
- Understand the park fee structure.
- Choose from a variety of experiences based on interest levels, time constraints, age, cultural/ethnic backgrounds, group affiliations, etc.
- Easily get to where they want to go.
- Utilize public transportation.

(B) Make connections between park resources and their meanings, which may occur when visitors:

- Visualize the complexity and scale of the social structures that molded Natchez and made estates like Melrose possible.
- Experience the seasonal rhythms of Natchez.
- Understand how the various resources fit together.
- Experience the park resources through guided interpretive activities or on their own and at their own pace.
- See cotton growing.
- See the river and the bluff.
- Step into the past and experience accurate elements of the Old South.
- Discover the multiple points of view regarding various past and present issues relating to Natchez.
- See how aspects of the historic life styles in Natchez still resonate today.

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- Discover the relevance and parallels of the park themes to their personal lives and contemporary society.
 - Experience the “haven of rest.”
 - Experience Natchez through all their senses.



EXISTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The following is a summary description of the visitor experiences and conditions as they existed at the onset of this long-range interpretive planning process. This section focuses mainly on perceived deficiencies and provides a baseline, which may help to justify many of the plan's proposed actions.

Information and Orientation

General trip planning regarding Natchez National Historical Park is available on the park web site, and the staff is in the process of significantly expanding the site to include many aspects of park information, interpretation and education.

The staff responds to numerous phone and mail requests for park, city, and regional information. Information packets, which include a map and various site bulletins, have been developed to handle some of the more common requests. The park currently does not have an official park folder.

The Natchez Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with other park partners, also respond to numerous information requests. The information provided for similar requests is not always consistent, and sometimes park information is not included.

Highway signs generally do a good job in directing travelers to the Natchez Visitor Reception Center.

The Natchez Visitor Reception Center is operated by the NPS, the Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau, and the State of Mississippi. A fourth partner, the Natchez Pilgrimage Tours, eventually may move to this facility. The goals of this facility are to consolidate the Natchez information providers, remove some the vehicle congestion from downtown, and get travelers to spend more time in the area. Eventually, the terminus of the Natchez Trace Parkway will be extended to the visitor reception center site. This will make the facility a visitor center for two theme-connected National Park Service areas.

Tour buses are required to stop at the visitor reception center first to get directions, necessary permits, etc. At peak times, visitors are encouraged to leave their cars and utilize a local shuttle system to nearby attractions. A study is currently underway to explore the expansion of this system to include more outlying sites such as Melrose.

The exhibits, literature racks, and interactive computer terminals in the visitor reception center all help orient visitors and introduce many of the significant resources and themes. The Eastern National bookstore carries a wide range of items related to the park themes, and is a place where visitors can purchase materials before or after touring the resources. An audiovisual program, considered to be a key to the orientation experience, also provides a good introduction to Natchez, its history and its people; however, only a small percent of the total visitors actually view it.

Space for temporary exhibits was not considered in the original design of the visitor reception center. Consequently, these displays sometimes create a cluttered feeling. Requests for additional exhibits have been proposed.

The large courtyard and the views from the center provide some special interpretive opportunities and allow visitors to see the river, the bluff, and vast farmlands in Louisiana.

Each partnering entity staffs a separate information desk. Although signs identify each agency, visitors often do not make the association between their inquiries and the appropriate information provider. Consequently, staff frequently must direct visitors to other desks to have their needs met.

Communication links within and among the various information providers at the visitor reception center could be improved. Sometimes new information or changes in existing information regarding one agency may not be related to all concerned. This can result in inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date information being given to visitors. Also, staff rotation within an agency can create communication gaps, especially when some staff members are assigned to the center on an infrequent basis.

Fort Rosalie

The Fort Rosalie site is not yet open to the public. Other than printed materials and some media references at the visitor reception center, there are no interpretive programs or media on-site. The park has acquired some of the privately owned properties. Plans for the site are to remove all of the structures except the Stietenroth House and a ca. 1940 log structure. The park is proposing that the Stietenroth House become a visitor contact facility for the site.

An independent study by Louisiana State University (LSU) has proposed the development of a green space corridor, extending from Fort Rosalie along the bluff to the historic Promenade.

William Johnson House

The William Johnson House and the adjoining McCallum Building are currently undergoing structural restoration and are not open to the public. The outbuilding behind the William Johnson House also requires restoration; although, it has periodically been open to the public, utilizing temporary exhibits and some earlier back yard features exposed during an archeological investigation.

An exhibit plan for the first floor of the William Johnson House and a historic furnishings plan for the second floor are underway and will be addressed only marginally in this plan. Proposed uses for the McCallum Building include rest rooms, bookstore, staff offices (on the second floor), and an elevator to the second floor back gallery (providing access to the Johnson family residence).

Melrose

When visitors arrive at Melrose, it is intended that they proceed first to the visitor contact center to purchase house tour tickets and get oriented to the site. Some visitors apparently do not see the signs and end up trying to enter the main house.

The historic furnishing report is near completion, although many of the recommendations have already been implemented. The 45-minute to one-hour house tours are limited to 20 people, but some park staff feel the number is too high both for security and for providing a quality

visitor experience. Programmatic access to the second floor is provided through a video at the visitor contact center.

Visitors are encouraged to tour the grounds, and a site bulletin is provided for this purpose. Plans are to restore and maintain the historic landscape in phases to a turn-of-the-twentieth-century period.

In addition to the visitor contact center and the main house, one of the slave cabins is only other building containing interpretive media. This building has some park-produced exhibits in one room and an interim furnished slave quarters in a second room. There is a need to know more about the individual people who lived and worked at Melrose and to interpret the site through them.

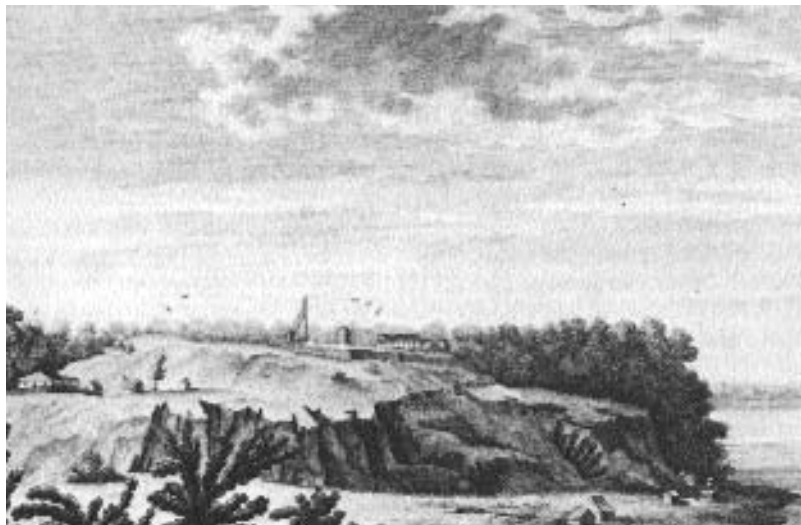
Other structures have interpretive potential for enhancing understanding and appreciation of the site's operation, stories, and for accommodating group activities. The park has plans for making some of the buildings accessible to visitors.

Education Program

The park has recently received a grant to enhance its education program. In addition to program development, an on-site facility is needed to accommodate visiting groups. Opportunities exist to develop programs with elementary, middle, and high schools both in Mississippi and Louisiana. These opportunities also extend to adult groups (i.e. Elder Hostel).

Partnerships

Although the park has a number of official and unofficial partnership agreements throughout the area, there is a need to expand some existing alliances and establish new ones. Many partnership efforts focus on grass roots, day-to-day contacts, the effects of which are incremental and may take time to produce visible results.

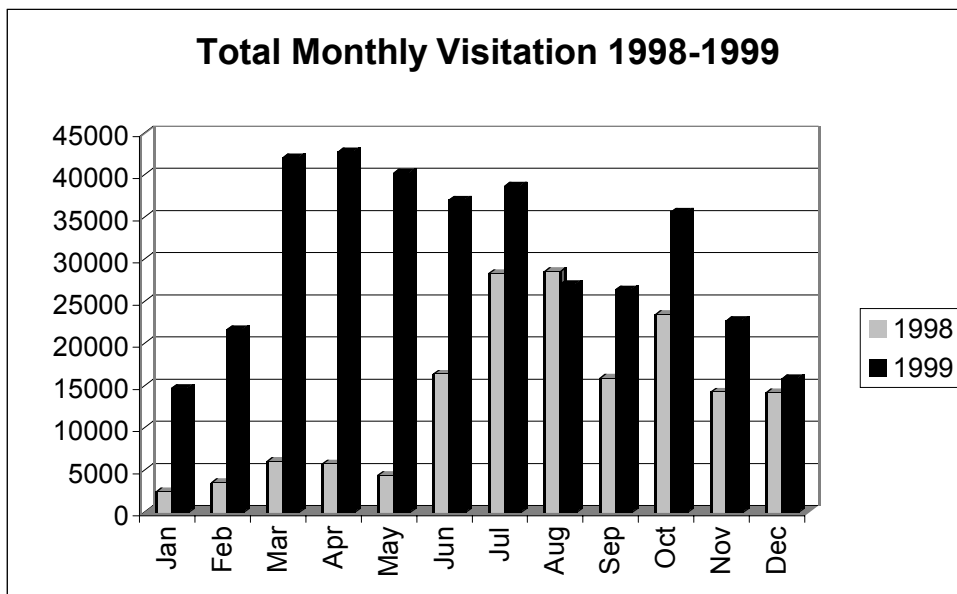
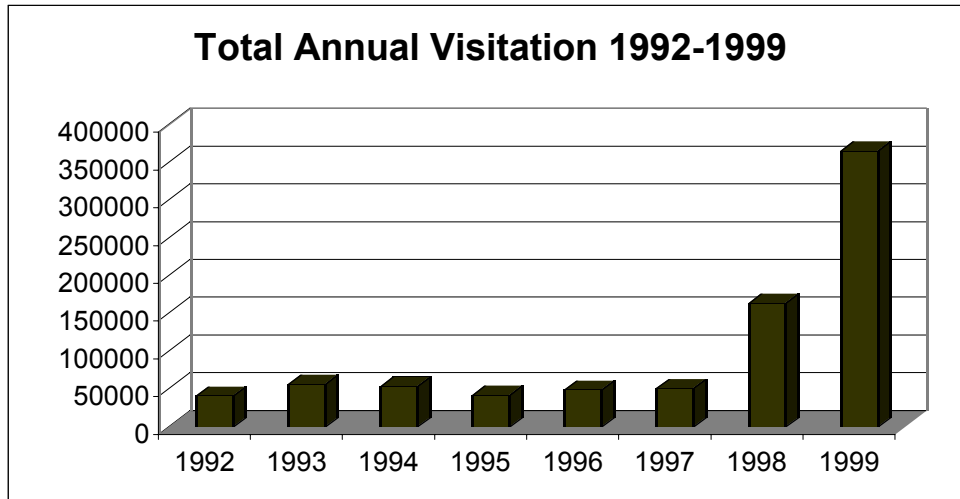


VISITATION & VISITOR USE DATA

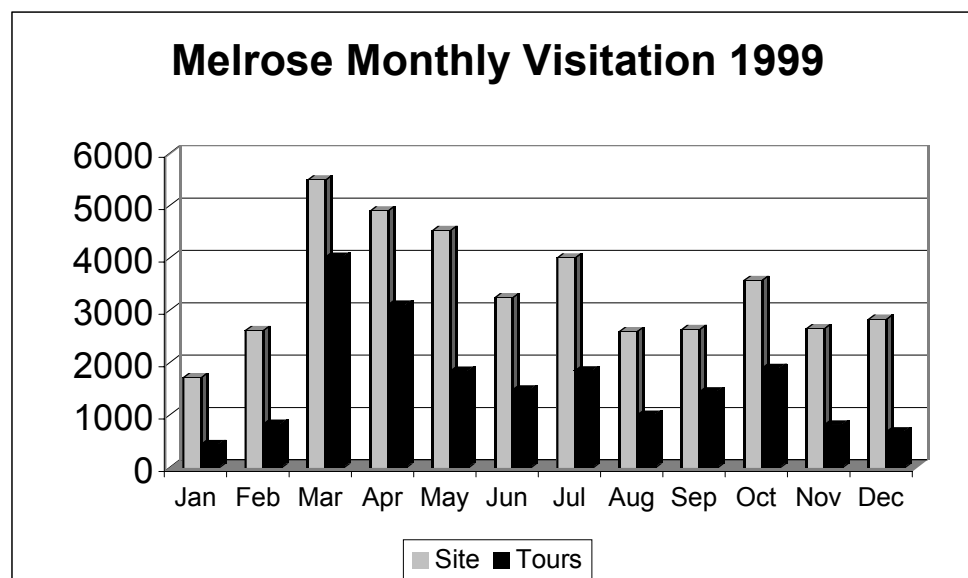
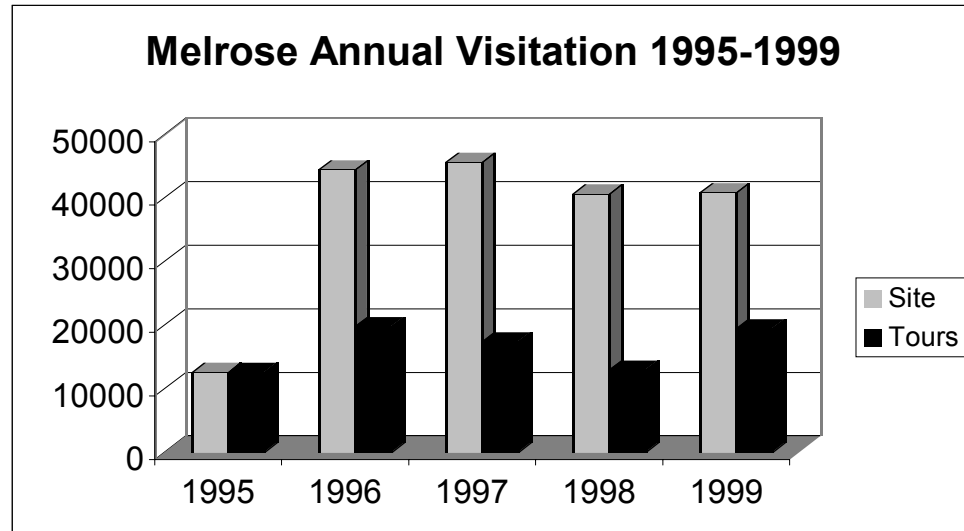
The following information regarding park visitors and visitation patterns is derived from data maintained by the Socio-Economic Services Division (WASO) in Denver, and from discussions with park staff. Additional data comes from the results of a February 2000 study prepared by the Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development, Division of Tourism Development, entitled Out-of-State Travel Party Indicators for Visitors Spending Most of Their Time in Natchez Based on the 1999 Statewide Conversion Study. The results of this study, which have implications to the overall interpretive program, include:

- The average travel party size of 3.0 persons spent an average of 4.0 nights in Mississippi, and most of that time was spent in Natchez.
- Texas, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Louisiana were the top six states for Natchez travel party visits.
- The vast majority (95.1%) of visitors to Natchez visited one or more historic sites.
- Visitors to Natchez noted a wide variety of information sources for planning their visit, the most common being paid advertisements in various publications.
- Over a quarter of the visitors (25.5%) were over 65 years of age; 23.1% of visitors were between 55-64; 12.7% were 45-54; 23.6% were 35-44; 11.8% were between 18-34; and only 3.3% were under 18 years of age.
- The average household income for visitors to Natchez is \$61,427.
- The majority (82.3%) of visitors listed “vacation” as their primary purpose for visiting Natchez.
- Over half (52.0%) of visitors used hotel/motel accommodations while visiting Natchez. Other modes of accommodation included: bed and breakfast (18.5%), recreational vehicle (12.6%), friends/family (8.0%), and campground (7.4%).
- Most visitors (61.8%) were “very satisfied,” and 34.3% were “satisfied” with their visit to Natchez.
- Nearly three-fourths (74.0%) of visitors to Natchez traveled by personal or rental vehicle. Other modes of transportation included: RV/motor home (12.6%), airplane (8.9%), and charter/tour bus (3.7%).
- The majority of visitors (79.0%) indicated they “definitely” (41.2%) or “more than likely” (37.8%) planned to make another trip to Natchez.
- While in Natchez, most visitors (61.5%) indicated they most liked the friendly atmosphere, Civil War and other historic sites/homes and sightseeing. The most common dislikes expressed by visitors (23.0%) were set tours, which inhibit seeing other homes and the lack of nighttime activities, written information/brochures, and shopping areas.

The following charts show total annual visitation for a ten-year period from 1990-1999 and monthly visitation figures for 1998 and 1999:



The next two graphs illustrate visitation to Melrose. The first shows the annual visitation figures from 1995-1999. The second graph illustrates monthly visitation for 1999. Both graphs depict the differences between total site visits and the numbers of people participating in guided tours of the mansion.



The percentage of visitors to Melrose in 1999 who participated in guided tours ranges from a high 73.2% in March to 24.6% in December, with an average of 47.7% over the year. Except for 1995, this latter percentage is the highest, and a marked increase over the 31.9% figure for 1998.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following is a description of program and media recommendations designed to further define, support, and achieve the mission, goals, themes, and objectives of the interpretive program for Natchez National Historical Park. The primary goal of all these recommendations is to facilitate connections between visitors and the tangible and intangible resources.

The discussion of each program or media proposal identifies its purpose, special considerations, and sometimes suggests means of presentation. It is important to remember that the latter are only suggestions and should not in any way limit the creativity essential during the media or program planning and design processes. On the other hand, proposals will be specific enough to provide guidance and define the parameters in which these creative energies can flow.

Pre-Arrival Information

General and trip planning information regarding Natchez National Historical Park will continue to be provided through traditional means by answering regular mail and telephone requests. In addition, this information will be provided on the park's web site. All mailed information should include the park's web site address and the addresses of other key partners who may have useful planning information. Even before leaving home, it is important for people to know that the Natchez experience involves multiple sites and agencies. In a partnership endeavor such as Natchez, it is not enough for each entity to market its own site. Information must be integrated either by including separate literature about each site in the mailings, and/or by continuing to collaboratively produce a single publication that presents material in a unified manner.

The practice of preparing standard informational packets to respond to some of the more common requests will be continued and possibly expanded to include packets for children. This not only will serve to motivate young visitors in advance of a visit, but it also will respond to children seeking Natchez information for various school projects.

The February 2000 visitor survey conducted by the Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development, Division of Tourism Development Research Unit indicates that visitors get information about Natchez from a variety of sources, including advertisements in popular magazines and tourism literature. Sometimes those preparing this information consult park staff, or at least request periodic reviews. To the extent possible, the park and park partners need to ensure that the printed and electronic tourism literature promoting NATC and the associated sites is accurate, appropriate, and up-to-date.

The park is in the process of expanding its web page. In addition to its use for information/orientation and links to park partners, this expanded site will offer great potential for presenting interpretive and educational material. Web site visitors will get a basic introduction to the sites and the associated themes and stories. The eventual addition of virtual tours of the resources will help people, including those who may never have the opportunity to visit Natchez, better understand and appreciate the themes, resources, and the people (past and present) associated with them.

Since much of the park's extensive museum collection is in storage, the expanded web site could offer a venue to "display" images of these items. Objects can be organized to support the primary themes, special events, etc., and changed periodically to retain visitor interest.

Some education materials, when developed, also can be made available through the web site. This could include pre- and post-visit lesson plans and activities, bibliographic materials (including materials available through the cooperating association), teacher training opportunities, and information about scheduling field trips or visits by park staff to the schools. Teachers could download some materials directly, or order others through the bookstore. Through careful design, this material can be useful to education groups who may not be able to come to the park.

The park currently does not have an official park folder. The plan is to wait until the William Johnson House is about to open. To ensure good project coordination with the Johnson House, the process of developing an official folder needs to begin at least a year before it is needed. The folder also can show the Fort Rosalie site, but indicate that it is not yet open to the public. Trails and map text can easily be added or changed in later printings.

On-Arrival Information

The park and park partners periodically need to assess the highway signs, which direct visitors to the Natchez Visitor Reception Center. This can be accomplished through periodic inspections and/or formal and informal visitor surveys. For example, answers could be recorded to basic questions such as, "Did you have any trouble getting here?"

Since many visitors to Natchez stay overnight, displaying Natchez National Historical Park rack cards at area hotels, motels, restaurants, and other tourism sites would give basic information about the park and directions to the visitor reception center. The cards are inexpensive to produce and often can be developed from the salvage from other printing projects.

The visitor reception center is still fairly new and seems to be functioning well in serving visitors' needs. No significant alterations are proposed for the current interpretive media; however, some operational changes are recommended. Since the film is considered to be an important and integral part of the visitor orientation experience, the partners need to explore ways to increase attendance. The charging of a separate fee may be a deterrent. Alternative solutions for consideration may include abolishing the fee or incorporating the charge for the film into the fees for various tours, etc.

There is a continued need to keep all the partners and other visitor service providers in Natchez up-to-date on new information, changes in existing information, etc. Regular staff meetings of the partners at the Natchez Visitor Reception Center could be scheduled for discussing information updates. Other methods of posting new information could include maintaining a central notebook only for posting new or changed information. Another option could be the development of an electronic bulletin board that could be accessed from computer terminals.

The "Natchez 101" training course should be continued. This program has been offered to all public service, tourism, and information providers in the region. Even if the training were offered only one or two times a year, participants at least would understand the importance of

continually updating visitor information, and everyone would learn where and how to input or access changes.

Continuity of staff at the visitor reception center is essential. The staff members need to know the operation and standard operational procedures need to be developed and maintained. Consistency in staffing also may help resolve some of the problems of continually needing to refer visitors to other information desks to have their needs addressed. While there always will be times when others need to fill in, a core informational staff will improve the overall operation at the visitor reception center and better serve visitors.

Fort Rosalie

The bluff, the views, a number of historic illustrations and narratives, and perhaps a few artifacts from long-ago archeological investigations constitute about all of the tangible resources of the Fort Rosalie site. More specific evidence of structures and objects associated with the fort, its evolution, and occupants still await the results of future archeology. If future studies produce tangible evidence of fort structures, it is recommended that, if possible, some appropriate means be developed to depict the features on the ground. This will give visitors a clearer and more tangible perspective of the site and its significance.

Design of the Fort Rosalie site for public use is beyond the scope and expertise represented in this planning effort, and some design elements may depend on the results of future archeological investigations. However, criteria that should be factored into the site design include the following:

- Visitors will find easy access to the site from the Natchez Visitor Reception Center. Visitors will be encouraged to walk or take the trolley to the site; however, those needing to drive their own vehicles will find limited parking at key access points.
- Accessible walkways will lead visitors to key resources and view points. Views of the river are essential to the Fort Rosalie experience.
- The Stietenroth House will serve as an accessible visitor contact and interpretive center for the site.
- Links to the river and other features along the bluff will be established (see LSU proposal).
- A unified wayside exhibit system will interpret key resources at Fort Rosalie and connect with other resources in the landscape. This will be part of a parkwide wayside exhibit study that creates a uniform design standard throughout the park and with partnership sites in throughout the city.

An orientation wayside exhibit (including a bulletin case) will be located at the main visitor entrance(s) to the Fort Rosalie site. These upright panels will provide an orientation to Fort Rosalie and strengthen the identity of the site as a unit of the park and as a unit of the NPS. The nature and route of the proposed bluff trail, if developed, also will be shown. A bulletin case could display information of a changeable nature, including interpretive activity schedules and special events at the site.

Interpretive wayside exhibits at the Fort Rosalie site would help visitors:

- Understand why the Natchez Bluffs became the chosen location for the fort(s).
- Learn that this site is a keystone to understanding and appreciating the history of Natchez.
- Make past and present visual and cognitive connections between the bluff, the river, the city, the vast agricultural lands, and the historic Natchez Trace.
- Visualize the changes to the fort as it evolved through Spanish, French, British, and American control.
- Appreciate the river as a vital transportation and communication link, as a source of physical and spiritual sustenance, and as a corridor to freedom or despair.
- Understand how history and archeology have helped reveal much of what we know about the site.

Restoration and use of the Stietenroth House as a staffed visitor contact center will allow for more in-depth interpretation of the Fort Rosalie stories. Any significant objects relating to the site's history (including potential objects recovered from future archeological investigations) also can be displayed and interpreted here. The primary stories which would be introduced or expanded upon at the Fort Rosalie visitor contact center will include:

- The effect of colonization on the native populations.
- Connections of the fort site to Grand Village, Emerald Mound, and to other European forts and settlements.
- The connection of the fort to the Natchez Trace, Under-the-Hill, the river, and the development of the city.
- The fort as a nucleus for colonial settlement, and why European settlers came here.
- The strategic importance of the site.
- The influences of geology, geography, climate, natural resources, etc. in determining the nature and patterns of human settlement and in directing the course of human interactions over time.
- The extent and fragile nature of the bluffs, including the current efforts to preserve them.

Fort Rosalie is shown as a terminus in the LSU proposal for a "Commons At Natchez" corridor linking key historic, educational, and passive recreation sites along the bluff. When developed, more detailed information about this corridor will be available the visitor contact center. As stated earlier, interpretive media (i.e. wayside exhibits) along this proposed route will share common design elements and will be developed in partnership with other community agencies and organizations.

Reconstructing any part of the fort (even if enough evidence to do so were discovered) would

be contrary to NPS policy. However, enough evidence may exist to construct a model or models of the fort to display in the visitor contact center. The model could show the topography of the site, the fort, and the connection with the river. In addition to serving as an excellent orientation tool, the interpretation of the model(s) could identify what is known, what is theorized, and what is not known from historical and archeological sources. The design also might consider a means to add features as new information is discovered.

Other potential exhibit concepts which should be considered include:

- Interpreting the significance of the Stietenroth House as an example of the middle class Jewish merchant influence in the development of Natchez.
- Illustrating the 20th century reconstruction of the fort.

The visitor contact center also would contain a small cooperating association sales outlet. Publications mainly would be limited to theme-related items directly associated with the site. One or more publications specific to Fort Rosalie need to be developed, and should be a high priority in the park/cooperating association publication plan for NATC. In addition, a CD-ROM audio tour program could be developed for the site, or even expanded to include Melrose, the proposed bluff trail, etc. See the Melrose section for additional thoughts in this proposal.

It is proposed that an area of the visitor contact center be used for showing an audiovisual program about Fort Rosalie. The primary purpose of this new program, probably shown in video format, would be to capitalize on the concept of the site being the key to understanding much of the history of Natchez. In addition to establishing many of the theme/story connections listed above, this video format also will allow for the portrayal of the people associated with the fort, including the Natchez Indians who were impacted by the fort's presence. In addition, audiovisual productions are an excellent vehicle for relating chronological events, and would thus be a means of illustrating the evolution of the fort.

Options for showing the audiovisual program at other locations should be considered. One such option is to work with the riverboat tour companies to have the film shown prior to their arrival at Natchez. This would provide an excellent introduction to the city and perhaps encourage passengers to make Fort Rosalie a must-see stop during their visit.

Fort Rosalie presents a multitude of opportunities for conducting personal services interpretive programs. Guided walks, talks, living or costumed history programs, special events, etc. all would provide direct contacts with visitors, and foster personal connections with the resources and their meanings.

William Johnson House

Work is currently in progress to plan and design exhibits for the first floor of the William Johnson House; the historic furnishings plan for the Johnson residence on the second floor is underway; and, uses for the first and second floors of the adjacent McCallum Building have been determined. Consequently, this plan will not address the specifics of these projects, or make recommendations regarding existing planning or design strategies.

An informational wayside exhibit for the William Johnson House will be developed as part of the parkwide wayside exhibit plan. This exhibit should convey basic information regarding hours of operation and identify the site as part of the NPS and the Natchez National Historical Park. An interpretive component of this exhibit will provide an introduction to William Johnson, his unique position in Antebellum Natchez society, and how his extensive diaries have allowed an in-depth look into his life.

The Johnson residence on the second floor will be furnished to the 1850s and barricades will be erected to protect the objects and provide climate control. It is proposed that park staff on the first floor will direct visitors upstairs for a self-guided tour of the residence. In-place text panels and/or a tour guide publication (available in multiple languages) would be the primary method for interpreting the rooms. This would be supplemented by one or more audio stations that could play various sound effects to convey the sense of a living home, or to quote excerpts from William Johnson's diaries. It also may be desirable to offer an explanation (perhaps in the tour booklet or in an introductory text panel) of the processes used for researching and furnishing the rooms.

One proposed addition to the exhibit room on the first floor is an interactive facsimile of William Johnson's guest ledger book. Visitors would be invited to sign the book and offer comments or thoughts about their experience. A header on each page could contain a different quote from Johnson's diary. The ledger could be displayed on a desk similar to Johnson's and visitors would learn that he kept similar ledgers for guests to his home. Blank ledger books also could be considered for sales items through the cooperating association.

The current exhibit plan does not include the outbuilding. The two first floor rooms of this structure have potential for interpreting additional aspects of the Johnson family, especially aspects of the family after William Johnson's death. Another option is to use either or both of these rooms for small group activities, perhaps associated with an on-site education program. Although the current archeological exhibit is of some interest, it does not constitute a compelling story for the site and should be documented and closed.

Due to the site's proximity to the Pilgrimage Tours facility and other commercial establishments, it is anticipated that the William Johnson House will receive high visitation. In this regard, it is proposed that the park consider extended hours of operation during peak periods.

Melrose

As part of the parkwide wayside exhibit plan, an informational wayside exhibit (with a bulletin case) will be located at the Melrose parking lot. This exhibit will orient visitors to the site and indicate that they should stop first at the visitor contact center for tickets and more detailed information. This wayside exhibit also will contain information regarding fees, hours of operation, safety cautions, and regulations pertaining to the use of the site.

An interpretive component of the orientation wayside exhibit (or perhaps as a separate wayside near the parking lot) will inform visitors that they have parked in what once was the vegetable garden for the estate.

Directional signs to the visitor contact center will be clearly seen by visitors, but the size and

design will not adversely impact the historic scene.

Rehabilitation of the visitor contact center at Melrose was begun prior to the start of this long-range interpretive planning effort. Consequently, this document does not propose any changes to existing plans for this facility.

Although the Historic Furnishing Report for the main house at Melrose is still in draft, many of the recommendations have been implemented. This long-range interpretive plan proposes no additions or changes to the furnishing proposals; however, full implementation of the historic furnishing study may require some adjustments to the guided tours of the house. Some interpreters already consider the 20-person maximum too high for a quality visitor experience and resource protection. This may become more of an issue when the house is completely furnished. Consequently, the staff will continue to experiment with the optimum tour group size.

Non-English speaking groups touring the home have created some special concerns with respect to protection and visitor understanding and appreciation of the resources. Recommendations to help alleviate this problem include:

1. Developing a printed and/or audio guide in various languages for use in touring the house and grounds. Specific information would be provided on the rules regarding the house barriers, staying with the group, etc.
2. An orientation program, shown before each house tour would not only present some of the contextual interpretation regarding the history of Melrose, but also prepare visitor for their tour.
3. Hiring staff with foreign language expertise.
4. Offering training in cultural diversity.
5. Contacting other sites to learn how they deal with similar concerns.

Since not all the key stories of Melrose are told on the house tours, it is important that visitors be encouraged to experience the grounds and other structures on the estate. This plan recommends the development of a well-designed tour guide publication for Melrose. The guide could be given to all visitors who purchase a house tour ticket, and sold to others.

The visitor contact center will occupy one of the four rooms on the first floors of the two brick dependency buildings at Melrose. Treating the remaining three spaces with historic furnishings has been considered, but rejected due to the lack of documentation to accurately determine past uses and the need to interpret more important aspects of the Melrose story.

Potential interpretive uses for the two dependency spaces include:

1. One or more exhibits to show the extent of the planter class in Natchez.
2. One or more exhibits to illustrate the nature and magnitude of the cotton plantation system that supported the southern economy and estates like Melrose.

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3. An exhibit introducing the families of Melrose over time. This exhibit also could encourage visitors stop at the slave cabin for more in-depth interpretation of the people who maintained the estate and served its owners.
 4. A rotating exhibit to display objects from the museum collection, perhaps including special exhibits of items relating to the Kelly family.
 5. One or more vignettes depicting elements of some of the dependency functions (i.e. kitchen, laundry, etc.) at Melrose.
 6. An audiovisual program (in video format) for basic site orientation and to depict or reinforce some of the context topics above, to prepare visitors for the house tour, and to motivate people to explore the grounds and supporting structures.
 7. A space for showing the programmatic accessible video of the second floor of the main house. It may be possible to use the same equipment as for the orientation program (see #6).

In addition to the above, some means of identifying plants in bloom is needed. This could be accomplished by placing small wayside “identifiers” (developed as part of the wayside exhibit plan) at key locations on the grounds. These could be rotated or changed as different plants come into bloom. Other vehicles include a changeable exhibit in the visitor contact center displaying photos of plants in bloom, and/or developing a publication that visitors could carry with them. When restored, the park has plans to produce a brochure for the formal gardens.

Since both public use and staff space is limited at Melrose, this plan recommends that as many support functions as possible be transferred to the Bally building after the museum collection is moved, or to another building in the park. This structure could be used for interpretive equipment and publication storage, safes, exhibit/program preparation, etc.

The exhibits in the slave cabin will be replaced and the third room (currently used for storage) will be opened to the public. One of the three rooms will be devoted to interactive exhibits. Here interpreters can conduct costumed/living history programs and demonstrations on various aspects of slave family life at Melrose. The exhibits would be designed so that visitors could interact with some displays even when staff were absent.

A second room of the slave cabin will contain exhibits about the people and the families who served the owners of Melrose. Here more research is needed to gather information about specific individuals and their stories. Other exhibits will show the pyramidal structure of the internal Melrose society, and the ultimate dependency on the slaves who worked on the cotton plantations.

The third room will be furnished as a slave quarters. It is recommended that the park seek funds to conduct an archeological investigation of the slave quarters and use this knowledge to assist in developing the furnishing plan. Any significant objects found during the investigation could be displayed to show how they influenced the furnishing process. Visitors also would understand that most of the furnishings likely came from what was thrown away from the main house.

The furnishing plan for the slave quarters also will consider the use of full-size cutouts of people. This would give an impression of the number of people who may have occupied the space. Period clothing (reproductions) on the figures also would illustrate the modes of dress of estate slaves.

Visitors will continue to be allowed to tour the grounds without being confined to designated routes. However, an accessible route will be necessary, including access to the various buildings that are open to visitors. The nature of any designated walkways should be contingent on the recommendations of the historic landscape study. For example, by following proposed fence lines etc., the visual impact of walkways can be mitigated.

Wayside exhibit needs for Melrose will be assessed as part of the proposed parkwide wayside exhibit plan. This will include consideration of the plants in bloom “identifiers” mentioned above and for waysides inside some of the buildings such as the stables. At Melrose, however, it is critical that these exhibits have minimal impact on the historic scene. This relates not only to the location, but also the number of waysides at the site. As with the proposed walkways, it may be possible to use elements in the historic landscape study (i.e. fence rows) to screen some waysides. The “so what” test should be employed in helping to determine the number of wayside exhibits. Basically, this test (by answering the question “so what?” regarding the proposed interpretive concept) limits the exhibits only to those that are the most powerful and critical to visitor understanding and appreciation of the significant resources and themes.

Another low impact method of interpreting Melrose is via CD-ROM players. The program, keyed to specific sites, can be accessed in any order, and visitors can tailor their tour to suit their personal needs and interests. This interpretive tool can reduce the need for some wayside exhibits; however, a means for distributing/renting, and maintaining the equipment becomes an added staff or cooperating association responsibility. Although the program may initially be developed for Melrose, it eventually could be expanded to include Fort Rosalie.

The GMP proposes that the interior of the carriage house be renovated for visitor use. Adapting this structure to include climate controls (heating and cooling) would be expensive and would impact the building’s historic integrity. While such action could be in the best interest of the visitor experience at Melrose, this plan recommends the park first experiment with a less invasive action. Here the building simply would be an open-air facility (with a barrier to prevent access to the loft) with seating and/or picnic tables provided. The structure would offer a sheltered view of the estate, and it could be used for group and special public use activities. The carriage house would be especially valuable for visiting school groups. Introductory and wrap-up activities could be conducted here, and the building would provide a sheltered space for eating lunches.

Personal Services

Personal services activities will continue to be an essential component of the overall interpretive program at the Natchez National Historical Park. These programs have the unparalleled advantage of being inspiring, versatile, alive, and tailored to the needs of individuals or groups. An interpretive staff presence also can help with the protection of fragile resources.

Interpreters, whether behind an information desk, roving, leading a tour, giving a talk, or conducting a demonstration, are the best of all interactive tools in enabling visitors to experience, understand, appreciate, and make personal connections with park resources.

In spite of their advantages, however, personal services interpretive programs have limitations. They are often limited in number, and sometimes reach only a small percentage of visitors. Quality and accuracy of personal services programs must be maintained with regular audits and continual education and training.

Discussions and recommendations regarding personal services interpretation appear throughout this document, but are summarized here to reinforce their importance in the park's overall interpretive program.

Guided tours will continue to be the best means of interpreting the main house at Melrose. The park will continue to experiment in determining the ideal group size, especially in light of completing the historic furnishing plan.

An interpretive staff presence, at least during peak visitation periods, also is proposed for the slave cabin at Melrose. Here, the interpreter would add a human dimension to the interactive exhibits, perhaps by conducting demonstrations and/or involving visitors in activities related to understanding aspects of slave life at Melrose. The potential also exists for expanded costumed or living history programs that could extend onto the grounds of the estate.

Other interpretive talks, demonstrations, and special theme-related programs could be conducted or initiated at the Melrose carriage house.

Once the Fort Rosalie site is developed, a variety of guided walks, talks, demonstrations, and special activities will help bring the site to life, and assist visitors in making connections with the complex of tangible and intangible resources. Fort Rosalie also offers excellent opportunities for a variety of consumed and living history activities.

Although information and orientation will be among the primary duties of interpreters at the William Johnson House and at the Natchez Visitor Reception Center, opportunities will exist for short talks, demonstrations and roving interpretive encounters. In addition, interpreters will be involved in conducting education programs at the William Johnson House, and the potential for guided walks from the visitor reception center to Fort Rosalie may be explored.

Community outreach programs will be expanded to include special programs about park sites and themes, but also to address special topics such as historic preservation, artifact conservation, oral history, etc. Many of these programs could be offered jointly with various park partners.

Education Program

The park recently has received a NPS grant to develop a curriculum-based education program. NATC, perhaps in partnership with key park partners, should conduct a survey of area educators to determine the level of interest and specific needs for park-based education programs. In Mississippi, there are elementary, junior high, and high school curriculum ties to park themes. Potential ties to Louisiana school curricula also need to be assessed.

The development of curriculum-based activities for all three park sites will form the core of the education program. These activities will be developed in partnership with area educators, who are most knowledgeable of school curricula and workload requirements. Other partners, such as the Historic Natchez Foundation and the Natchez Association for the Preservation of Afro-American Culture (NAPAC), may be helpful in this endeavor.

Interest and incentives for holding teacher workshops will be explored. Through cooperation with school administrators, workshops could be scheduled as an alternative activity to an in-service teacher workday. Free family passes for tours of Melrose could be given to workshop participants. Workshop attendees could receive free curriculum guides and other lesson-planning materials, and the training could be designed in partnership with area colleges/universities to provide academic credit for participants.

As mentioned in earlier sections, the carriage house at Melrose and a room in the ancillary building at the William Johnson House could be used for some education program activities. It also may be possible to use a room of the Fort Rosalie visitor contact center for educational activities. These facilities will be especially useful for introductory and follow-up exercises, and for other activities during inclement weather. Materials developed for various education programs also could be stored here.

Elements of the education program will be available through the park web page. Some materials would be free and could be downloaded by anyone. Other materials could be advertised for sale through the cooperating association. Web site educational materials would be available to a worldwide audience, including many groups who may never have the opportunity to visit Natchez.

In addition to organized school groups, a partnership effort directed toward area elder hostel programs is recommended. This may necessitate special training for both park and elder hostel staff, and perhaps require the park to look for ways to integrate with already established programs.

An Education Plan for the park will more specifically address the goals and objectives for this aspect of the interpretive program.

Additional interpretive/educational staff will be required to fully implement all of these education proposals.

Publications

Publications represent a form of interpretive media that visitors can take with them as they tour the park or read later. The park and the cooperating association will continue to provide visitors with a wide spectrum of theme-related and orientation publications. Some items are offered free of charge; other items are available in a variety of price ranges. A survey is needed to show how current publications are distributed across various price ranges, age groups, and specific interpretive themes and visitor experience goals. Tools for conducting these studies are available and can be easily implemented.

From the results of the publications survey, the park and the cooperating association should work together to develop a publications plan for NATC. The plan will address both free and sales items, as well as electronic literature on the park web site.

Internet web sites can be viewed as electronic publications, and they have great potential for reaching worldwide audiences. In addition to general information and trip planning, the park web page can be used as an interpretive vehicle. On the web, many elements of the park themes and specific stories can reach out to people who may never be able to visit in person. Also, through programs like “Teaching With Historic Places,” a partnership program between the NPS and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, curriculum-based educational activities can be developed to reach schools across the nation.

Some specific publication needs already identified in this plan include:

- An official park folder
- Tour guide for Melrose
- Tour guide for Fort Rosalie
- Additional publications (addressing various age, interest, and price ranges) specific to each of the three park sites.
- Audio tour (perhaps in CD-ROM format) for the sites.
- Reproduction of William Johnson’s guest ledger book (a blank book with some Johnson excerpts)

Partnerships

The implementation of this long-range interpretive plan will depend on the continuation of existing partnerships with others and the establishment of new ones. Many of these cooperative efforts have been discussed in other sections of this plan.

Partnerships are successful when all parties contribute to- and gain from the alliance, when all parties are involved in defining the goals and responsibilities of each participant, and when there is a continuous liaison among all participants.

For interpretation, these special arrangements (both formal and informal) can include coordinated efforts in providing information, orientation, training, research, special and outreach programs, personal services activities, and media planning and development.

In addition to formal partnerships with the Historic Natchez Foundation, NAPAC, and the City of Natchez, the park has informal partnership agreements with the State of Mississippi, the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge. But the partnership spirit in Natchez goes beyond those listed above. Partnerships in Natchez also include the grass roots, small-scale, day-to-day contacts and involvement with the community. The visible results of these contacts often are slow to realize, and like many education programs, some results may take one or more generations.

Implementation of some of the proposals in this long-range interpretive plan will require new or strengthened partnerships with:

- Area schools in both Mississippi and Louisiana in assessing educational program needs and in developing curriculum-based activities.
- NAPAC in strengthening the interpretive and visitor experience links with the William Johnson House and other park resources and themes.
- The City of Natchez and others in developing the interpretive and visitor experience potential of the bluff area.
- The City of Natchez in expanding the trolley transportation route and in creating links with the new Natchez Convention Center.
- The U.S Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service in helping to promote awareness of public lands in the region.
- The City of Vidalia and the Army Corps of Engineers in exploring interpretive connections with the proposed visitor center and ferry across the river.
- The many tour and tourism information providers and historic house museums in the region to ensure the accuracy and quality on information and to continue offering a variety of training opportunities.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential part of planning. Evaluation asks whether goals were met, outcomes achieved, and it can identify and quantify causes and results. Like most other aspects of planning, evaluation should be an on-going process, the form of which is tailored to the tasks and questions to be answered.

Formative evaluations are conducted during a process; summative evaluations are performed at the end of a process. In the NPS, summative evaluations have been more common. For example, the achievement of media objectives are determined after the media are installed, or the achievement of personal service and education goals are measured at the conclusion of a program.

Formative evaluations are increasing in the NPS, especially with the implementation of GRPA and value analysis. Benefits are seen as the degree to which proposed actions support long-range mission goals; costs include long-term costs, and are estimated as accurately as possible at each stage of planning or design. Cost effectiveness of projects is then evaluated in various ways at each major decision point.

Therefore, in addition to the assessment tools recommended in the publications section, the park will utilize a variety of formal and informal evaluation techniques to measure the effectiveness of all media and programs. Some evaluation mechanisms already exist, such as those used in evaluating personal services programs. Other processes, such as focus groups or a periodic in-house review of existing media and programs, can be conducted by park staff. More formal research may require professional assistance.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Provisions will be made to accommodate the needs of special populations who visit the Natchez National Historical Park. Special populations are identified as those with sight, hearing, learning, and mobility impairments; visitors who do not speak English; and, the elderly and young children.

Accommodations will be made for access to the sites as well as to most of the interpretive media. Guidelines and regulations are available to assist staff and media/facility designers. Generally, these accommodations will benefit all visitors.

Public Law 90-480, the Architectural Barriers Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 establish standards for physical access. Any new or redesigned facilities, as a matter of course, will be designed for accessibility for physically disabled visitors and employees.

Other regulations, laws, and standards include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Director's Orders No. 42, and Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs, Facilities, and Programs.

All new interpretive media also will conform to National Park Service, June 1996 Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media (see Appendix).



STAFFING & TRAINING

Staffing

The existing permanent staff is 7 FTE, 1 Division Chief, 4 Park Rangers and 2 Park Guides. Existing staffing is distributed as follows:

| Function | Staffing | Personnel |
|--|----------|--|
| Melrose Contact Station | 2 FTE | 1 permanent Park Guide, 1 FTE seasonal Park Guides |
| Melrose Tours | 5 FTE | 4 permanent Park Rangers, 1 permanent Park Guide |
| Natchez Visitor Reception Center Contact Station | 1.5 FTE | .5 FTE seasonal Park Guides 1 FTE Volunteers |
| Management/Supervision | 1 FTE | 1 Supervisory Park Ranger (Chief Ranger) |
| Total FTE | 9.5 | |
| VIP/Partner FTE | 1.0 | |
| Employee FTE | 8.5 | |

The vision of this plan would provide visitors with expanded interpretive opportunities. It would also require the operation of four sites. The projected staffing needs for each facility/function are as follows:

Melrose

| Function | Staffing Needs | Proposed Staff | Alternative Staff |
|------------------------------|----------------|--|---|
| Site Management, Supervision | 1 FTE | GS-9/11 Park Ranger | |
| Melrose Contact Station | 2 FTE | GS-4, 5 Permanent or Seasonal Park Guides | Visitor Use Assistants, Volunteers |
| Melrose expanded programs | 1 FTE | GS-5 Park Guide | Permanent Park Rangers, Seasonal Park Guides, Volunteers* |
| Melrose Tours | 5 FTE | GS-4, 5 Permanent or Seasonal Park Guides* | Volunteers, Park Partners** |

William Johnson House

| Function | Staffing Needs | Proposed Staff | Alternative Staff |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|---|
| Site Management, Supervision | 1 FTE | GS-9 Park Ranger | |
| Johnson House Contact Station | 2 FTE | GS-5 Park Guides | Seasonal Park Guides, Volunteers, Park Partners** |
| Johnson House Formal Programs | 1 FTE | GS-5 Park Guide | Seasonal Park Guides, Volunteers, Park Partners* |

Fort Rosalie/Natchez Visitor Reception Center

| Function | Staffing Needs | Proposed Staff | Alternative Staff |
|------------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Site Management, Supervision | 1 FTE | GS-7/9 Park Ranger | |
| Natchez VRC Contact Station | 2 FTE | Volunteers | Permanent or Seasonal Park Guides, Visitor Use Assistants* |
| Fort Rosalie Contact Station | 2 FTE | GS-4, 5 Permanent or Seasonal Park Guides | Seasonal Park Guides, Volunteers* |
| Fort Rosalie/NVRC Programs | 1 FTE | GS-5 Park Guide | Seasonal Park Guide, Volunteer, Park Partner, Contractor* |

Curriculum-Based Education Program

| Function | Staffing Needs | Proposed Staff | Alternative Staff |
|------------|----------------|---|-------------------|
| Management | 1 FTE | GS 9/11 Park Ranger or Education Specialist | |
| Program | 2 FTE | GS-7/9 Park Ranger, 1 FTE Volunteers | Volunteers |

Management/Leadership

| Function | Staffing Needs | Proposed Staff |
|-----------------------|----------------|---|
| Management/Leadership | 1 FTE | GS-11/12 Supervisory Park Ranger (Division Chief) |

* The park has had difficulty hiring qualified seasonal staff. 1/3 of vacant seasonal positions go unfilled. This would not be a reliable means of ensuring core services, such as the Melrose Tour and Contact Station, are consistently provided.

** Most potential park partners who could be involved in providing this function have severe staffing problems and are only able to provide limited services at the sites they manage.

Staffing

| Title | Grade | Type | FTE | Funded | Unfunded |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------------|------------|
| Supervisory Park Ranger | 11/12 | PFT | 1 | 60500 | 8000 |
| Park Ranger (Melrose) | 9/11 | PFT | 1 | 52500 | 8000 |
| Park Ranger (Education Specialist) | 9/11 | PFT | 1 | 52500 | 8000 |
| Park Ranger (Johnson House) | 9 | PFT | 1 | 52500 | |
| Park Ranger (Fort Rosalie/NVRC) | 7/9 | PFT | 1 | 52500 | |
| Park Ranger (Education) | 7/9 | PFT | 1 | | 52500 |
| Park Guide (Melrose Programs) | 5 | PFT | 1 | | 42000 |
| Park Guides | 5 | PFT | 9 | 84500 | 295500 |
| Park Guides | 4 | SEAS | 4 | 75000 | 11000 |
| Volunteers/Partners | - | VIP | 3 | | |
| | | | 23 | 159,500.00 | 401,000.00 |

This section has presented the preferred alternative, staffing most positions with permanent and seasonal employees. Alternatives have been presented for nearly all positions, and the possible staffing ranges from 20 FTE of employees and 3 FTE of VIP/Partners to 14 FTE of employees and 9 FTE of VIP/Partners. The park anticipates that an aggressive recruitment program aimed at increasing the volunteer staff will be required in any case.

Training

All interpretive staff, including volunteers and park partners, presenting interpretive programs or conducting informal interpretation at the park shall, at a minimum, be trained in the fundamentals of interpretation, currently known as 101.

In addition to on-going training in interpretive competencies and gaining increased knowledge of the resources, park interpreters and others who deal with the visiting public need to keep abreast of current research, technologies, programs, and activities, not only as they relate to park resources, but also regarding visitor studies, interpretive media, education, etc. By working across operational/organizational boundaries, effective and efficient ways to alert and/or involve staff in new or on-going projects and innovations can be explored. The park is in a unique position to provide this kind of employee development opportunity through its partnerships with local, regional, and national colleges and universities, and its close proximity and relationships with nearby National Park areas.

The park and other partners also will continue providing opportunities for interpretive skills and resource training to non-NPS folks who engage in interpretive, education, and information/orientation activities.



SUPPORT RESOURCES & FACILITIES

Adequate space for some interpretive program support functions sometimes get excluded from building designs and from determinations of space requirements. The following will serve as a partial checklist for interpretive support needs:

Storage for park folder and other free publications

Storage for cooperating association supplies and sales stock

Storage for educational program materials

Storage for period clothing and interpretive program demonstration and special event materials

Exhibit preparation/storage space (for developing and storing changeable and/or temporary exhibits)

Personal services interpretive program preparation space

Mail, message, and break room for staff

Park library

Offices and office supply storage



SUMMARY OF PRODUCTS

The following is a list of the action items proposed in this long-range interpretive plan for the Natchez National Historical Park. While the list does identify new or redesigned facilities and media, it does not include things like mechanical systems, security systems, rest rooms, offices, storage areas, workrooms, parking lots, and road/trail development and signing. These items, plus all new/restored structures and furnishings (e.g. seating, information desks, and sales displays) should be included in Denver Service Center, regional office, cooperating association, or contracting specifications. Also consult the Staffing section for personnel needs.

The following actions are organized by park site:

Parkwide or Multi-Site

Develop parkwide wayside exhibit proposal and plan

Expand park web site (on-going)

Develop official park folder

Conduct publication needs assessment

Develop information packets for children

Design and produce park rack cards

Develop audio tour for park sites

Improve communication links with park partners and other information providers

Assist in training for those involved in information, interpretation, and education endeavors

Assess needs and expand education program

Explore partnership potential for implementing bluff development plans

Expand personal services interpretive programs for all sites

Fort Rosalie

Develop exhibits for visitor contact center

Develop AV program for visitor contact center and off-site use

Develop cooperating association sales area for visitor contact center

Develop wayside exhibits for site and bluff trail (as part of parkwide plan)

Develop personal services interpretive programs for the site

Develop site component of audio tour

Develop site component of education program

William Johnson House

Develop exhibits for first floor (on-going)

Complete implementation of historic furnishing plan (on-going)

Develop wayside exhibit for the site (as part of the parkwide plan)

Develop self-guiding tour publication, text panels, and/or audio components for Johnson residence

Develop site component of education program

Design facsimile of Johnson guest ledger book for exhibit room and as potential sales item

Develop personal services interpretive programs for the site

Melrose

Develop wayside exhibits, including consideration of plant “identifiers” (as part of parkwide plan)

Assess directional signing

Complete visitor contact center (on-going)

Complete implementation of historic furnishing plan of main house (on-going)

Develop optimum tour group size for tours of the main house

Develop procedures/media for handling foreign language-speaking visitors on house tours

Conduct archeological investigation of slave cabin

Develop historic furnishing plan for slave cabin

Develop new exhibits for slave cabin

Develop exhibits for first floors of the two brick dependency buildings

Develop AV program for the site

Develop new self-guiding tour publication for the site

Develop site component of audio tour

Move appropriate support functions to the balley building

Adapt carriage house for public use/group activities

Develop site component of education program

Expand personal services interpretive programs for the site

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Implementation of the recommendations in this long-range interpretive plan will be phased over the next ten years, and many will require additional planning and design efforts. Other action items can be implemented immediately, within existing funds and staffing levels.

Changes in staffing, funding, and other unforeseen circumstances can alter priorities, especially when they are long-range or contain a lot of specific detail. Consequently, the following list shows only general phasing priorities. Specific descriptions/components of each item can be found in the Implementation Strategies section of this document. The following list will serve as a guide in developing the annual work program components of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

The implementation priorities are:

[The priorities will be developed by the park staff and included in a later draft. If needed, I can send copies of priority lists from other interpretive plans. Also, I suggest that the priorities be grouped into First, Second, and Third steps, or into Short, Medium, and Long-range actions.]

HFC does not include cost estimates in long-range interpretive plans. Cost estimates are provided on request via a separate form. This allows the plan to be used by prospective contractors without divulging estimated costs.]

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APPENDIX

Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media

[To be added at final draft.]